

Amendment to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus comprising:

[[-]] an RF coil system comprising M RF coils for detecting coil sensitivity encoded RF signals from a region of interest, M being an integer larger than 2, the RF coils being disposed circumferentially around the region of interest; and

[[-]] N receiver channels for receiving and processing the detected RF signals, N being an integer larger than 1 and smaller than M, wherein at least two RF coils are combined for reception of RF signals of said RF coils with a single receiver channel, wherein said at least two RF coils are selected so as to provide maximum spatially varying coil sensitivities along the principal axis for coil sensitivity encoding.

2. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as ~~claimed in claim 1~~, comprising:

an RF coil system comprising M RF coils for detecting RF signals from a region of interest, M being an integer larger than 2; and

N receiver channels for receiving and processing the detected RF signals, N being an integer larger than 1 and smaller than M, wherein at least two RF coils are combined for reception of RF signals of said RF coils with a single receiver channel, wherein said at least two RF coils are selected so as to provide maximum spatially varying coil sensitivities along the principal axis for coil sensitivity encoding wherein pairs of two RF coils are each combined and connected to a separate receiver channel, wherein at least one RF coil is not combined with any other RF coil.

3. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim [[1]] 2, wherein said RF coil system comprises 8 RF coils, wherein 6 receiver channels are provided and wherein pairs of two RF coils are each combined for reception of RF signals of said pairs of RF coils with two separate receiver channels, respectively.

4. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein said 8 RF coils are arranged in the shape of a ring, ~~in particular forming a birdcage head coil arrangement.~~

5. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim [[3]] 2, wherein said pairs of two RF coils, which are each combined, ~~which~~ are arranged obliquely to the principal axes for sensitivity encoding, ~~in particular the anterior-posterior and left-right axes.~~

6. (Previously Presented) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the RF coils of a first pair are arranged parallel to each other and the RF coils of a second pair are arranged parallel to each other and orthogonally to the RF coils of the first pair.

7. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim [[5]] 2, wherein the RF coils of a first pair are arranged orthogonally to each other and the RF coils of a second pair are arranged orthogonally to each other, wherein each of said RF coils of the second pair is arranged parallel to one RF coil of the first pair.

8. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim [[3]] 2, wherein the RF coils of a first pair are arranged parallel to the principal axis for sensitivity encoding and the RF coils of a second pair are arranged obliquely to the principal axis for sensitivity encoding.

9. (Previously Presented) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein the RF coils of said first or said second pair, respectively, are juxtaposed.

10. (Previously Presented) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein the RF coils of said first or said second pair, respectively, are parallel to each other.

11. (Currently Amended) A magnetic resonance imaging method comprising the steps of:

[[-]] detecting RF signals from a region of interest using an RF coil system comprising M RF coils, M being an integer larger than 2; and

[[-]] receiving and processing the detected RF signals using N receiver channels, N being an integer larger than 1 and smaller than M; ~~wherein~~ at least two RF coils are being combined for reception of RF signals of said RF coils and connected with a single one of the receiver channels, at least one other of the RF coils is not combined with any other RF coil and is connected with another one of the receiver channels wherein ~~said at least two RF coils are selected so as to provide maximum spatially varying coil sensitivities along the principal axis for coil sensitivity encoding.~~

12. (New) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein the M RF coils are mounted in a birdcage coil arrangement.

13. (New) A magnetic resonance imaging apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein said pairs of RF coils which are combined are arranged obliquely to the anterior-posterior axis and the left-right axis.

14. (New) A magnetic resonance imaging method as claimed in claim 11 wherein said at least two RF coils are selected so as to provide maximum spatially varying coil sensitivities along the principal axis for coil sensitivity encoding.